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Part VI
Human rights and humanitarian affairs

Section 24
Palestine refugees

(Programme 22 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001)

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* The present document contains section 24 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001. The complete proposed programme budget will subsequently be issued in final printed form as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/54/6/Rev.1).

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Section 24
Palestine refugees

(Programme 22 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001)

Overview

24.1 The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by the General Assembly by its resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 as a separate entity within the United Nations system. Its present mandate has been extended until June 2002. By its resolution 3331 B (XXIX) of 17 December 1974, the General Assembly decided that the expenses relating to the emoluments of international staff in the service of UNRWA, which would otherwise have been charged to voluntary contributions, should be provided for under the regular budget of the United Nations with effect from 1 January 1975 for the duration of the Agency's mandate. In view of the extension of the Agency's mandate, it is assumed that the programme will be continued during the biennium 2000–2001.

24.2 The overall strategy of UNRWA for the coming biennium is to continue to provide the assistance it has rendered for some 50 years until there is a final resolution to the issue of the Palestine refugees. That assistance involves the provision of basic education, health and relief and social services to eligible Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The ability of the Agency to provide that assistance is entirely dependent on sufficient voluntarily contributed funds being made available to it annually. In addition, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the Agency embarked upon a process of harmonizing its planning and services with those of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

24.3 The implementation of the overall strategy will involve the provision of:

(a) Education services, to meet the basic educational and training needs of Palestine refugees and to enhance their educational and employment opportunities;

(b) Health services, to meet the refugees' basic health needs;

(c) Relief and social services, to provide the neediest refugees with assistance in maintaining a reasonable standard of existence and in improving their capacity to become more self-reliant, thereby reducing their dependence on such assistance, and to develop social programmes for women, youth, the disabled and other groups.

24.4 The Peace Implementation Programme, which was launched by UNRWA in 1993 shortly after the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and following consultations with the Palestinian leadership, the major donors of UNRWA and host Governments, has attracted generous funding from donors. Its main aim was to make the results of the peace process felt at the local level through a wide-ranging programme to develop infrastructure, improve living conditions and create employment opportunities. To ensure that the tangible benefits of the peace process were distributed throughout the refugee community, UNRWA emphasized the importance of projects in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in the Palestinian self-rule areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

24.5 The total amount of pledges and contributions received under the two phases of the Peace Implementation Programme by the end of 1998 was $221 million. Implementation of funded projects will continue into the biennium.

24.6 Most of the 365,000 Palestine refugees registered in Lebanon face deplorable living conditions and depend almost entirely on UNRWA for basic services. The deteriorating socio-economic situation in the country, combined with the inability of those refugees to gain full access to the job market or to avail themselves of public health facilities, has heightened their desperation and misery. Since the resources available to UNRWA were insufficient to cope with the growing needs of the refugee community in Lebanon, the

Agency launched a special emergency appeal in July 1997 seeking $11 million in additional contributions to support essential health, education and relief and social services activities.

24.7 Donors responded generously to the appeal, pledging $9.3 million. By mid-1998, the Agency had received $8.7 million of that amount and had allotted $8.2 million. Of the total pledges, $4.6 million was allocated for hospitalization assistance, procurement of medical supplies and other projects in the health sector; $3.8 million was allocated for the construction, equipping and running costs of two secondary schools and the introduction of new training courses at the Siblin training centre; and $0.9 million was allocated for other projects, related mainly to shelter rehabilitation. Implementation of most of those projects was under way by mid-1998.

24.8 In accordance with General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), UNRWA entered into agreements with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), under the terms of which those organizations assumed responsibility for the technical aspects of the Agency's education and health subprogrammes. UNESCO makes available the services of the UNRWA Director of Education, as well as two other international specialists, and WHO provides the Director of Health and one other international specialist on a non-reimbursable basis. The Agency currently employs a total of 24 extrabudgetary international staff, whose posts are financed from other sources, and 22,000 locally recruited staff, all of whom are paid out of the voluntary contributions at its disposal for its operational activities. UNRWA intends to reduce further the number of international staff funded through extrabudgetary resources to 15 by the end of the biennium 2000–2001.

Table 24.1 **Summary of requirements by programme**

(Thousands of United States dollars)

(1) *Regular budget*

Programme	*1996–1997 expenditures*	*1998–1999 appropriations*	*Resource growth*		*Total before recosting*	*Recosting*	*2000–2001 estimates*
			Amount	*Percentage*			
Palestine refugees	23 425.2	21 804.8	(4.2)	–	21 800.6	1 549.8	23 350.4
Total	**23 425.2**	**21 804.8**	**(4.2)**	–	**21 800.6**	**1 549.8**	**23 350.4**

(2) *Extrabudgetary resources*

1996–1997 expenditures	*1998–1999 estimates*	*Source of funds*	*2000–2001 estimates*
		(a) Services in support of	
–	–	(i) United Nations organizations	–
–	–	(ii) Extrabudgetary activities	–
–	–	(b) Substantive activities	–
628 309.0	624 603.0	(c) Operational projects	772 786.0
628 309.0	**624 603.0**		**772 786.0**
651 734.2	**646 407.8**		**796 136.4**

Table 24.2 **Summary of requirements by object of expenditure**

(Thousands of United States dollars)

(1) *Regular budget*

Object of expenditure	*1996-1997 expenditures*	*1998-1999 appropriations*	*Resource growth*		*Total before recosting*	*Recosting*	*2000-2001 estimates*
			Amount	*Percentage*			
Posts	23 425.2	21 781.2	(4.2)	–	21 777.0	1 548.6	23 325.6
Other staff costs	–	23.6	–	–	23.6	1.2	24.8
Total	**23 425.2**	**21 804.8**	**(4.2)**	**–**	**21 800.6**	**1 549.8**	**23 350.4**

(2) *Extrabudgetary resources*

1996-1997 expenditures	*1998-1999 estimates*	*Object of expenditure*	*2000-2001 estimates*
398 894.0	388 272.0	Posts	448 062.0
8 714.0	7 170.0	Other staff costs	8 277.0
9 493.0	2 508.0	Consultants and experts	3 270.0
2 567.0	2 735.0	Travel	3 883.0
33 590.0	29 424.0	Contractual services	44 961.0
19 549.0	31 285.0	General operating expenses	33 721.0
55 848.0	84 793.0	Supplies and materials	97 075.0
21 880.0	10 829.0	Furniture and equipment	20 437.0
49 654.0	38 336.0	Alterations and improvements	42 917.0
28 120.0	29 251.0	Grants and contributions	45 983.0
–	–	Other	24 200.0
628 309.0	**624 603.0**	**Total**	**772 786.0**
651 734.2	**646 407.8**	**Total (1) and (2)**	**796 136.4**

Table 24.3 **Post requirements**

Programme: Palestine refugees

	Established posts		*Temporary posts*					
	Regular budget		*Regular budget*		*Extrabudgetary resources*		*Total*	
	1998-1999	*2000-2001*	*1998-1999*	*2000-2001*	*1998-1999*	*2000-2001*	*1998-1999*	*2000-2001*
Professional category and above								
USG	1	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
ASG	1	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
D-2	1	1	–	–	3	3	4	4
D-1	10	10	–	–	–	–	10	10
P-5	16	16	–	–	7	7	23	23
P-4/3	51	51	–	–	13	6	64	57
P-2/1	2	2	–	–	4	2	6	4
Total	**82**	**82**	**–**	**–**	**27**	**18**	**109**	**100**
General Service category								
Principal level	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Other levels	10	10	–	–	2	2	12	12
Total	**10**	**10**	**–**	**–**	**2**	**2**	**12**	**12**
Grand total	**92**	**92**	**–**	**–**	**29[a]**	**20[a]**	**121**	**112**

[a] Includes three posts funded by UNESCO and two by WHO.

Programme of work

24.9 The activities of UNRWA correspond to programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001, as revised (A/53/6/Rev.1).

Expected accomplishments

24.10 The main expected accomplishments in the Agency's education programme during the biennium 2000–2001 will be: (a) meeting the needs arising from high natural growth rates in the school population and the admission of children of refugee families returning to the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the Oslo accords, and providing the necessary school facilities and the required additional teaching staff; (b) introducing the curriculum developments adopted by the host Governments in the Agency's general education programme; (c) meeting the requirements of the labour market locally and in the region by reflecting those changes in the vocational training programme, revising the syllabuses and introducing new courses to meet market demand and deleting others; and (d) improving the quality of teaching, training and physical and human resources, as well as the level of staff competence.

24.11 Anticipated accomplishments in the health programme will include: (a) preserving the sustainable investment achieved in primary health care; (b) improving the quality of essential health services provided to Palestine refugees within the financial means available; and (c) streamlining health policies and harmonizing standards with those of host Governments and the Palestinian Authority.

24.12 In the relief and social services programme, the Agency's expected accomplishments include alleviation of the poverty of the most disadvantaged of the Palestine refugees through their increased participation in income-generation schemes.

24.13 A variety of small-scale and microenterprise revolving loan funds have been established by UNRWA to assist in the establishment of new enterprises, thereby creating jobs and generating income as well as developing the capacity of women entrepreneurs amongst the Palestine refugees. UNRWA envisions a sizeable expansion of the programme during the biennium 2000–2001, upon receipt of additional contributions.

Outputs

24.14 During the biennium the following outputs will be delivered:

(a) *Education*. The Agency's education programme will continue to provide general education, teacher education and vocational/technical education for Palestine refugee children and youth within the framework of the prescribed curricula of the host Governments and the Palestinian Authority in accordance with their needs, identity and cultural heritage and consistent with UNESCO standards. The Agency will continue its efforts to alleviate the adverse consequences of the repeated austerity measures which the Agency was forced to introduce and maintain over the past six years and to improve the quality of teaching, training and staff development, and will continue to rely on UNESCO for technical expertise and support;

(i) General education. The Agency currently provides basic education (i.e., elementary and preparatory education) in all its areas of operations to 458,716 eligible refugee children in 650 UNRWA schools, 3 of which provide secondary education on an exceptional basis in Lebanon. In the 1998/99 school year, there was an increase of 2.56 per cent, or 11,448 pupils, over the preceding school year. General education is currently provided by 13,006 teaching staff. The school population is expected to grow at the rate of 2.72 per cent per annum to some 497,113 children by the end of the biennium, as a result of natural growth among the Palestine refugee communities and the expected return of additional refugee families to the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, the Agency has to cater for the curricular changes adopted by the host Governments. Both factors will result in increases in staff as well as non-staff costs;

(ii) Vocational and technical training. The Agency currently provides 4,632 vocational and technical/semi-professional training places in 8 training centres (2 in Jordan, 3 in the West Bank and 1 each in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Gaza) where 50 trade and technical/semi-professional two-year courses are offered. The training curriculum is regularly revised and updated to conform to the demands of the local and regional labour markets. The number of places at the training centres is expected to grow to about 4,750 by the end of the biennium if sufficient special contributions are forthcoming for the establishment of planned new vocational and technical courses;

(iii) Teacher education. In order to meet the requirement of the Government of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority that teachers in the basic education cycle possess four-year first-level university degrees, the Agency currently provides pre-service teacher training, with a capacity of 900, at its three education science faculties in Jordan and the West Bank; the programme leads to a four-year first-level university degree. The education science facility in Jordan provides in-service teacher education to 630 teachers to upgrade their qualifications from a two-year diploma to a three-year first level university degree. Both programmes are expected to continue at the same level during the biennium 2000–2001. The Agency also provides pre-service teacher training to 100 students at its training centre in Lebanon to prepare teachers for the first three elementary grades; the programme will continue at the same level during the biennium. In addition, the Agency provides regular institutionalized in-service training organized by the Institute of Education at Amman headquarters and implemented by the education development centres in the Agency's area of operations. The programme is currently provided to 1,231 teachers, head teachers and other education staff and is expected to continue

at the same level during the biennium, as a result of the increasing number of novice teachers hired annually on a fixed-term basis;

(iv) University scholarships. UNRWA provides university scholarships to refugee students who excel in general secondary school examinations to attain the first-level university degree. Owing to austerity measures adopted in August 1997, the General Fund portion of the university scholarship allocation was frozen. Since then, university scholarships have been subject to the receipt of donor contributions. In 1998/99, the Agency awarded scholarships to 895 students, down from 1,055 in the 1997/98 school year. It is expected that the number of scholarships will decrease drastically during the biennium if the current policy has to be maintained and no additional donor funds are received;

(v) Placement and career guidance. The Agency helps Palestine refugee graduates of its training centres and other institutions to secure suitable jobs, whether locally or in neighbouring countries. Counselling and career guidance are also provided to Palestine refugee students in both the preparatory and secondary cycles to acquaint them with the training courses available at the Agency's training centres and to help them in selecting the proper vocation. Such services are expected to continue through the biennium in view of the high outcome achieved at minimal cost;

(b) *Health Services*. The foundation of UNRWA health care remains its network of 122 primary health-care facilities. Cost-efficiency measures, such as hospitalization costs, which were implemented to make optimal use of the limited financial and human resources, will be maintained. Likewise, the initiatives, which were started under the Peace Implementation Programme to rehabilitate and upgrade a health infrastructure at the primary level and improve environmental health conditions in refugee camps, will continue to receive high priority. The Agency completed the construction and equipping of a 232-bed hospital and a college of nursing in the Gaza Strip, both of which are in the process of being integrated within the health-care system of the Palestinian Authority;

(i) Medical care services. UNRWA offers comprehensive primary health care to some 3.5 million Palestine refugees through a network of 89 health centres, 23 health points and 10 maternal and child health clinics. The services comprise outpatient medical care, prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases and mother and child health-care and family-planning services which are fully integrated within the activities of the health centre. These services are complemented by school health services, oral health services and other support, such as laboratory and radiology services. The Agency's primary health-care facilities currently record over 7 million medical consultations per year and provide preventive care to approximately 300,000 pregnant women and pre-school children. Family planning services and specialist care for non-communicable diseases, including diabetes mellitus and hypertension, are fully integrated within the Agency's primary health-care activities. Specialist care, with emphasis on obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics and cardiology, is also an integral part of primary health-care activities. In addition to services provided at the UNRWA-run 43-bed hospital at Qalqilia in the West Bank and the six maternity units in Gaza, the Agency assists with secondary care through a hospitalization scheme for refugee patients at government and non-governmental organization hospitals. The Agency's health programme also provides food aid in the form of dry rations to the most vulnerable population groups, including pregnant women and nursing mothers. Targeted health education and promotion activities are core elements of the programme and are implemented within a multisectoral approach. Current initiatives are aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles among population groups at risk, as well as educating youth on prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases and prevention of tobacco use;

(ii) Environmental health services. Basic environmental health services, including sewage disposal, management of storm-water run-off, provision of safe drinking water, collection and disposal

of refuse and control of rodents and insects, are currently being provided to some 1.2 million registered refugees living in camps. The number of registered camp dwellers is expected to grow by 3.5 per cent per annum. In recognition of the fact that improvement in environmental health conditions in refugee camps is crucial not only to reducing health risks but also to socio-economic development, UNRWA places special emphasis on planning and implementing capital projects to improve infrastructure for water, sewerage and drainage and solid waste management, especially in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. Five years after the establishment of the Agency's special environmental health programme in the Gaza Strip, it is approaching the final stage of providing services in the subsectors of sewage, drainage and solid waste management;

(c) *Relief and social services*. The relief and social services programme will continue to support the most disadvantaged of the Palestine refugees to facilitate their social and economic self-reliance and development. This will be achieved through short-term direct relief for the destitute and longer-term developmental social welfare programmes. The latter include poverty alleviation and income-generation schemes (skills training and enterprise support) targeted especially at women, unemployed youth, disabled persons and others who would otherwise have difficulty in securing access to work and an income. A key strategy in the biennium 2000–2001 will be the strengthening of the community's own mechanisms for tackling those issues through technical and financial support, in particular to community-based projects. Professional training of staff in developmental concepts and techniques will continue to be an essential component, and will emphasize further the shift in their role from provider to facilitator that was begun in previous bienniums;

(i) Relief services. Direct material and financial assistance is provided to those refugee families that are below the poverty line and who meet the Agency's eligibility criteria. In emergency situations, such assistance is extended to affected communities, refugees and non-refugees as a temporary relief measure. Currently, some 188,370 refugees (5.31 per cent of the population) are receiving assistance under the special hardship programme. The aim of the programme is to ensure minimum standards of nutrition and shelter and to intervene with cash grants in crisis situations if funds are available. The highest proportion of special hardship cases among the refugee population are found in Lebanon (9.59 per cent) and Gaza (8.86 per cent). The number of special hardship cases is expected to grow by an average of 3.5 per cent per annum during the biennium 2000–2001;

(ii) Social services. All registered refugees are in principle eligible to benefit from the social services provided. In practice, the target group is about 10 per cent of the total registered refugee population, which currently stands at some 3.54 million and is expected to grow by 3.5 per cent per annum to some 3.92 million by the end of 2001. Technical and financial support is given for skills training and support for income-generating enterprises (via grants and soft loans); rehabilitation of disabled persons; community development projects; women's literacy awareness and other developmental programmes; and youth activities and leadership training. Social counselling is also given individually and in groups as an additional support to clients of those programmes;

(d) *Income generation*. Separate from the income-generation activities carried out under the poverty alleviation programme, which seeks to assist destitute refugee families to become self-reliant, in 1991, the Agency set up a variety of revolving loan funds for small-scale and microenterprises to finance new enterprises, create jobs and generate income and to develop the capacity of women entrepreneurs. Over the past eight years, the Agency's small-scale enterprise programme has provided 819 business loans in Gaza and the West Bank valued at over $12.74 million, which have created over 1,800 new jobs and strengthened an additional 8,000. During the last four years, the Agency's microcredit programmes in Gaza have disbursed over 15,000 microenterprise loans, valued at $12.34 million. With an annual repayment rate of 99 per cent, the Agency's microenterprise credit programme in Gaza is the most successful of its kind in the area, covering 100 per cent of its operational costs from

programme income. The Agency recently extended its microfinance activities to the West Bank, where it issued 558 loans, valued at over $500,000, over the last nine months of 1998. The Agency is seeking additional contributions from donors to expand its activities in that area.

Resource requirements (at current rates)

Posts

24.15 The estimated requirements of $21,777,000 would provide for 92 existing regular budget posts. The decrease of $4,200 is due to the proposed redeployment of one D-1 post from the Agency's Liaison Office in New York to its headquarters in Amman, to be utilized for the Director of Relief and Social Services, in exchange for a P-5 post. That redeployment results from the reorganization of responsibilities within UNRWA.

Other staff costs

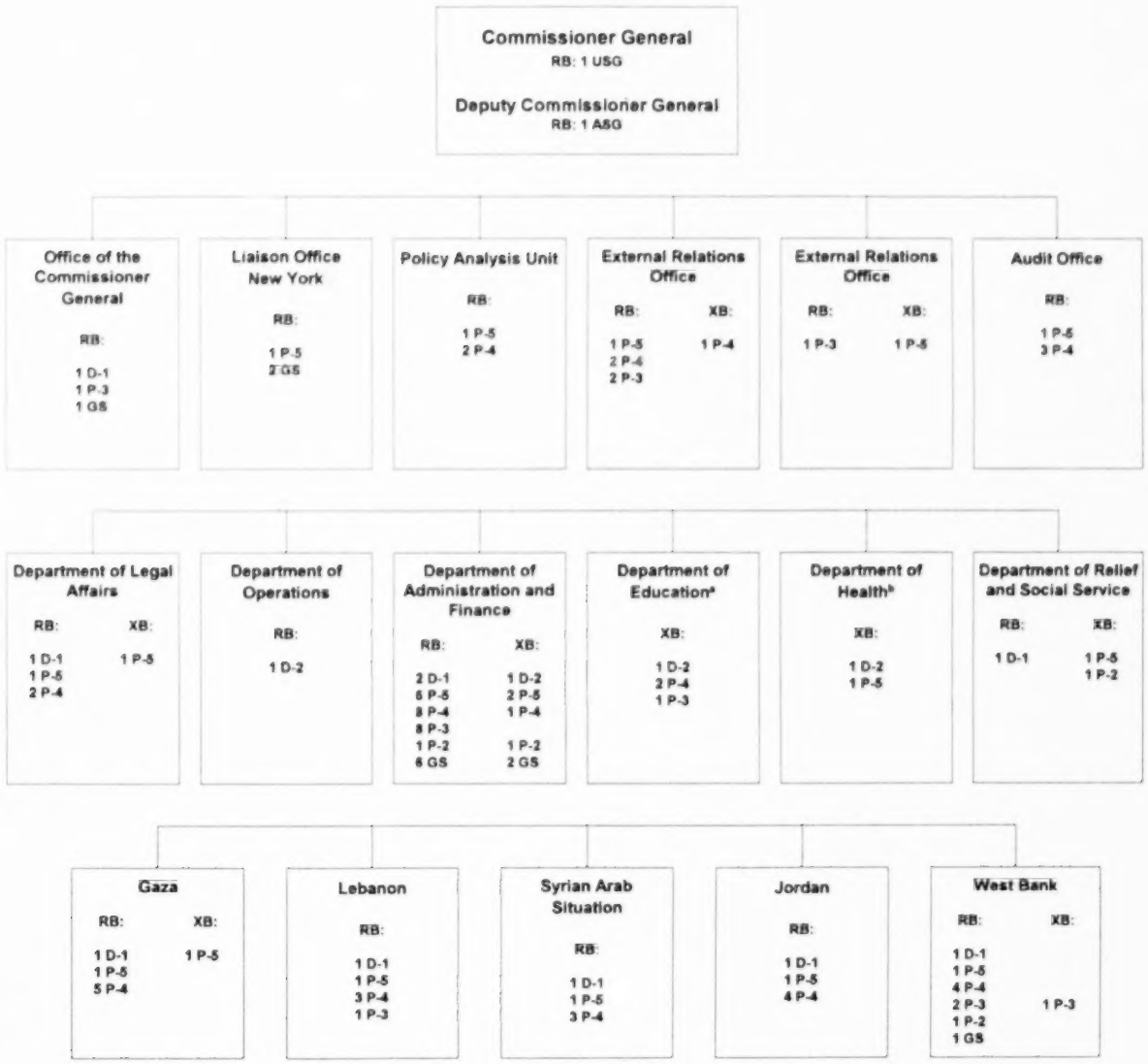
24.16 Estimated requirements of $23,600 would provide for general temporary assistance for secretariat services rendered to UNRWA officials while in New York, either to attend meetings of the General Assembly or on other official business.

Table 24.4 **Summary of follow-up action taken to implement relevant recommendations of the internal and external oversight bodies and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions**

Brief description of the recommendation	*Action taken to implement the recommendation*
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/52/7 (chap. II, part VI))	
In connection with extrabudgetary posts, the Advisory Committee recalls that, for the biennium 1996-1997, it had recommended that a report be submitted to it on how the separation entitlements of staff who are paid from extrabudgetary resources are determined. The Committee points out that the report has not yet been submitted (para. VI.21).	Separation entitlements for extrabudgetary posts are built into the staff cost budget. A provision of 7 per cent of the total staff costs is made to meet such payments as they occur. This provision has proved to be adequate over the years.
Board of Auditors (A/53/5/Add.3)	
The Board recommends that the Administration provide the Finance Department with the required resources for the Department to function more effectively (para. 30).	The Agency has made efforts to fill vacancies in the newly re-established Department of Finance headed by a Controller, appointed on 21 February 1999. The Controller supervises three divisions at Gaza headquarters, each headed by a P-5, and two divisions at Amman headquarters, each headed by a P-5.
The Board recommends that the Project Monitoring Unit be equipped with the required resources for more efficient monitoring of UNRWA's projects (para.38).	International posts in External Relations and the Project Monitoring Unit have been unfrozen and recruitment action is under way. The expanded staff resources will lead to more efficient monitoring of UNRWA projects.

Brief description of the recommendation	*Action taken to implement the recommendation*
The Board recommends that, in order to improve the efficiency of the internal audit staff, UNRWA should make budgetary provision for enhancing the training of the internal audit staff (para. 66).	UNRWA is increasing the staffing resources in the Audit Office; resources for training have also been made available.
The Board recommends that UNRWA ensure that all systems are tested for year 2000 compliance, with sufficient lead time to address any deficiencies (para. 69).	UNRWA is testing all applications for year 2000 compliance. This process should be completed by end-March 1999, allowing sufficient time to make necessary changes before the Agency's internal deadline of September 1999.
Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/52/426)	
The Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted a review of internal controls within UNRWA as a consequence of the criminal investigation and made several recommendations for the strengthening of those controls (para. 51).	UNRWA management is taking correction action on internal controls through various steps, including strengthening of the Audit Office, revising its finance technical instructions, checking on compliance with the finance technical instructions and internal controls and procedures.
UNRWA management is taking corrective action on internal controls (para. 52).	UNRWA is attempting to introduce a computer-controlled system, but at the time of writing has not yet located an appropriate system.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
Proposed organizational structure and post distribution for the biennium 2000-2001



[a] UNESCO provides for the Director of Education, as well as two other international specialists, on a non-reimbursable basis.

[b] WHO provides for the Director of Health and one international specialist on a non-reimbursable basis.